

In support of real prospects for young scientists, and for good and reliable working conditions

Petition on behalf of the 'Mittelbau' (mid-level faculty) at the University of Vienna

For some time now the University of Vienna has been attempting to raise its research profile internationally. This is legitimate; in fact, the current crisis underlines the importance of high-level basic research. However, the manner in which the recently signed collective bargaining agreement for university staff in Austria is being implemented threatens to aggravate the gap between the university's ambitious goals and its personnel policy. Transitional arrangements have been negotiated that have the effect of partly excluding lecturers and current assistants in training, both strongly represented groups at the University of Vienna, from benefitting from the collective contract for the time being. It is to be feared that these transitional arrangements are only the tip of the iceberg. On the one hand, critical problems have not been solved, for example, under the current interpretation like of the prohibition of consecutive work contracts, employments at the University for more than six years are prohibited. On the other hand, the collective bargaining agreement leaves considerable leeway in interpreting its individual provisions, so much so that it already has become apparent that the current personnel policy, which is as problematic as it is undemocratic, will not only be continued, but may even be aggravated, instead of being replaced by a policy that includes the concerned persons in the processes of decision making.

The undersigned therefore support the demands of the *Initiative Zukunft der Wissenschaft* (Initiative Future of Science) and of the *IG Externe LektorInnen und freie WissenschaftlerInnen* (Syndicate of External Lecturers and Independent Scientists)¹ for better prospects and working conditions at the University of Vienna. In particular, we advocate the following:

The unity of research and instruction must be upheld and strengthened

The new collective bargaining agreement provides for the creation of so-called senior lecturer posts. By what is known at present, the Austrian version of the senior lecturer will be similar to its Anglo-Saxon model in name only. While in Great Britain senior lecturers undertake both research and instruction, senior lecturers at the University of Vienna will have a teaching load of thirteen hours. Research-driven instruction will be impossible under such circumstances. Not only will the diversity and quality of instruction suffer, both of which are fed by the research and by the extramural experience of the teachers, but research itself, which profits from the stimulus of teaching, will be affected. What is more, no new posts for senior lecturers will be created in addition to existing posts, even though the shortage of staff at many departments demands it. As a result, it can be expected that a large number of current lecturers will lose the opportunity to teach. This 'solution' to remedy the shortage of teachers is a mockery of international practice and is unacceptable for the persons concerned. Instead it is requisite to strengthen the unity of research and instruction and to provide for appropriate working conditions.

¹ The *Initiative Zukunft der Wissenschaft* (ZdW) is a federation of lecturers, research fellows in third-party funded projects, assistants and assistants in training, representing different academic disciplines at the University of Vienna. Its goal is to enhance the working conditions for young academics. The *IG externe LektorInnen und freie WissenschaftlerInnen* is a national platform that represents the interests of external lecturers and independent scientists in academic, educational and research matters (<http://www.ig-elf.at/>).

Research must not become a private affair

What is being proposed for future PhD-posts is of a similar mindset. Until now, part of the working time for PhD-students (presently assistants in training, henceforth B1-posts) was designated for writing their dissertation (= research). Henceforth, by appointing only half-time posts for administrative tasks at a gross salary of c. € 1.200,-, working on the dissertation will be relegated to private activity. Nevertheless, the University plans to use the (published) fruits of these endeavours for its balance of research activities, which in turn will form the basis of future budget negotiations. It is foreseeable that a brain drain will result, in which highly qualified staff gravitate towards universities that do not subscribe to wage dumping of this sort. In contrast to this, we demand the recognition of the dissertation as an integral part of a person's qualifications, research activities, and academic work, work from which the University profits, and for which the University must pay adequate wages.

Reasonable career models for scientists must be available

The collective bargaining agreement provides for the possibility of offering qualification criteria to presently employed assistants. Upon meeting these criteria, assistants will be promoted to associate professors without having to undergo further evaluation processes. We welcome this regulation, which is in accordance with international practice, and we demand that, in the framework of a transparent personnel planning, appropriate agreements are made with the employees. Likewise, we consider it expedient that assistants in training in post-doc positions, as well as post-doc project employees and lecturers, be granted the opportunity to apply for such positions with qualification criteria. This entails a revision of the way the prohibition of consecutive work contracts, as well as the offering of tenure-track jobs, are handled. The current practice at the University of Vienna, according to which the employment of assistants and research fellows must not exceed a maximum length of six years, is a form not of promotion, but of demotion for young academics.

Good and reliable working conditions are prerequisite for internationally recognized research. The University of Vienna will only be able to achieve its ambitious scientific goals if it strives for internationally recognized academic standards.

First signed by:

Prof. Dr. Ulrich Brand, Universität Wien - Institut für Politikwissenschaft

Prof. Dr. Thomas Fillitz, Universität Wien - Institut für Kultur- und Sozialanthropologie

Prof. Dr. Luise Gubitzer, Wirtschaftsuniversität Wien - Institut für Institutionelle und Heterodoxe Ökonomie

Prof. Dr. Hannes Haas, Universität Wien - Instituts für Publizistik- und Kommunikationswissenschaft

Prof. Dr. Roger Keil, Director of the City Institute at York University (CITY)

Prof. Dr. Eva Kreisky, Universität Wien - Institut für Politikwissenschaft

Prof. Dr. Konrad Paul Liessmann, Universität Wien - Institut für Philosophie

Prof. Dr. Sighard Neckel, Universität Wien - Institut für Soziologie

Prof. Dr. Anton Pelinka, Institut für Konfliktforschung, Wien

Prof. Dr. Birgit Sauer, Universität Wien - Institut für Politikwissenschaft

Prof. Dr. Emmerich Tálos, Universität Wien – Institut für Staatswissenschaft

Prof. Dr. Dieter Segert, Universität Wien - Institut für Politikwissenschaft

Prof. Dr. Karl Ucakar, Universität Wien – Institut für Staatswissenschaft

Prof. Dr. Kees Van Der Pijl, University of Sussex - International Relations

Prof. Dr. Brigitte Young, WWU Münster - Institut für Politikwissenschaft